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ABSTRACT

What is the nature of the "no-show" problem for the fall semester of 1973-74 at Alcorn State University? Approximately 45 percent of those students surveyed did not attend college in the fall. The primary reason for nonattendance at any college was given as financial by 34 percent of the students surveyed. The primary reason for those attending colleges other than Alcorn State University was a desire to attend a college nearer home. (Author)

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A LOOK AT THE BLACK COLLEGE APPLICANT WHO DOES NOT REGISTER

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Title: A Look at the Black College Applicant Who Does Not Register

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Abstract:

This study was designed to determine the nature of the "no-show" problem for the Fall Semester of 1973-74 at Alcorn State University. Approximately 45% of those students surveyed did not attend college each fall. The primary reason for non-attendance at any college was given as financial by 34% of the students surveyed. The primary reason for those students attending college but not at Alcorn State University was given as wanting to attend a college nearer my home.

Introduction:

It is not uncommon for Institutions of Higher Education, in their admissions practices, to accept many applicants who, in fact, fail to register as students. Such applicants are referred to as "no-shows" by admissions personnel. Institutions with high "no-shows" rates that continue over a period of years have a number of concerns regarding this phenomenon.

One concern is that of staff members and various departments of the institutions having to spend time and effort processing the applications of persons who never attended the institution. Not only is this process costly but it ties up personnel who are needed to assist with other functions of the institutions. Another concern is that of having to prepare facilities, services, and classes for new students on the basis of the number planned than were actually needed. The cost of

this type of over-planning can be substantial and can frequently represent an unnecessary expenditure of funds where financial resources are already limited. A third concern is that of some institutions having to turn applicants away because of crowded conditions only to find, after registration, that a number of vacancies exist because of the "no-shows." This situation not only costs the institution in its loss of student fees, but denies some applicants an opportunity to enter the institution of their choice.

Alcorn State University has experienced relatively high "no-shows" rates for several years and has faced some of the accompanying concerns. In an effort to arrive at some understanding of the nature of the problem at the university and to identify an appropriate course of action, a follow-up study of the undergraduate no-shows for the fall semesters of 1973 and 1974 was completed.

Methodology:

Two sources of information were used for the study. The primary source was a questionnaire which was designed to obtain information from the "no-shows" on why they failed to register at the university and what they chose to do instead of attending the university. As a second source, the files in the Registrar's Office contain the application form of the "no-show" students.

Questionnaires were mailed to no-shows with a cover letter requesting that the questionnaire be completed and returned in postage paid envelopes. Most of the questionnaires returned came within a three week period following the mailing date. Those students requesting specific information were referred to various departments on the campus.

Findings:

Questionnaires were mailed out to a little over 1,000 students. 25% of the "no-shows" responded to the questionnaire.

The educational status of the "no-shows" groups for the two fall semesters is shown in Table I. As revealed in Table I, 40% of the students did not attend college in 1974 and 50% did not attend in 1973. It is interesting to note that none of the respondents for either years indicated that they were attending a post-high school technical institution. One might conjecture that the definition of a post-high school technical institution was an elusive factor of the respondees.

TABLE I

EDUCATIONAL STATUS OF NO-SHOWS

Educational Status	Number		Percent	
	1974	1973	1974	1973
I did not attend College this fall	65	71	40	50
I am attending a Junior College	31	22	19	16
I am attending a Senior College	67	40	41	28
I am attending a University		9		6
I am attending a Post-high School Technical Institution	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	163	142	100	100

Note: Figures were rounded by the nearest whole number.

Those not attending college at all indicated their reasons by checking the appropriate statements on a checklist provided and results are shown in Table II. The reason mentioned most often for both years was that of not having adequate finances. All of the other reasons were approximately the same in percent of returns for each of the two years.

TABLE II

REASONS FOR NOT ATTENDING COLLEGE

Reasons	Number		Percent	
	1974	1973	1974	1973
Military Service	8	8	11	10
Illness or other health problems	6	9	8	10
Marriage	10	4	13	5
Financial	25	30	33	35
Employment	11	9	14	10
Undecided about future	10	14	13	16
Other (specify) Personal	6	4	8	5
None		8		9
TOTAL	76	86	100	100

Persons in the sample who attended institutions other than Alcorn State University were requested to indicate the reason by checking the appropriate statement on the checklist. Table II presents responses to the checklist. The reason mentioned most often for each of the two years was I wanted to attend a college nearer my home. Cost more than I could

handle and major not available at Alcorn State University were the next two most prevelant reasons given for the year 1973. However, these were not the major reasons for those responding in 1974. Notification of acceptance too late, I applied in case I wasn't accepted by another college, and financial notification was too late were the major reasons for 1974.

TABLE III

EXPLANATION OF NON-ATTENDANCE AT ALCORN STATE UNIVERSITY

Reasons	Number 1974	Number 1973	Percent 1974	Percent 1973
I wanted to attend a college nearer my home	39	28	23	29
Major not available at Alcorn State University	17	9	10	10
Cost more than I could handle	7	11	4	12
Unsatisfactory on-campus housing	0	0	0	0
Unsatisfactory food service program	1	0	1	0
Better to attend a smaller college	11	6	6	6
Better to attend a larger college	0	2	0	2
Correspondence with Alcorn officials unsatisfactory	3	2	2	2
Notification of acceptance too late	24	4	14	4
I applied in case I wasn't accepted by another college	25	4	14	4
Financial notification was too late	25	7	14	4
Other	21	16	12	17
None		7		7
TOTAL	173	96	100	100

Conclusions:

It appears that the percentage of fall semester "no-shows" at Alcorn State University is substantial enough to warrant special attention. Consideration should be given to a re-evaluation of the current recruitment and admissions procedures. Greater involvement of the instructional staff in providing more information to high school counselors may be profitable.

Consideration should also be given to the establishment of a formalized pre-college counseling, orientation, and registration program in the summer for those who apply for admission in the fall. Such a program would enable the staff to have ample time to work with students in small groups and, hopefully, find solutions to the problems that contribute to the decisions on the part of the applicant to attend different institutions or to postpone college attendance.